

REMARKS

First, the Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of Claims 1-8 and 24-28 as set forth on page 5, numbered paragraph 8 of the Official Action.

Claims 21 and 27 have been objected to for allegedly containing minor informalities. Claim 21 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 27 has been amended to address the issues raised in the Official Action. It is respectfully submitted that these amendments obviate the objections.

Claims 21 and 22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,792,660 to Spillert et al. (hereinafter referred to as “Spillert”). Claim 23 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Spillert in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,788,139 to Ryan (hereinafter referred to as “Ryan”).

Although Applicants do not agree with this rejection, Claims 21-23 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer in order to expedite prosecution. The Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of these claims in a continuation application.

CONCLUSION

All rejections having been addressed by the present amendment and response, Applicants believe that the present case is in condition for allowance and respectfully request early notice to that effect. If, however, any issues remain to be addressed in this matter which might be resolved by discussion, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call Applicants' undersigned counsel at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

PIPER RUDNICK LLP



Jerold I. Schneider
Registration No. 24,765
Attorney of Record

1200 Nineteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036-2412
Telephone No. (202) 861-3900
Facsimile No. (202) 223-2085

Christopher W. Raimund
Registration No. 47,258